



United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Specialty Crops Inspection Division

EMPLOYEE ROTATION POLICY

This policy provides a framework for rotating assignments and duty locations for Agricultural Commodity Graders (ACGs) to help ensure the integrity and objectivity of our inspection staff. Supervisors must ensure that ACGs assigned to in-plant inspections, terminal market inspections, and area office labs, including State inspectors assigned to market offices and shipping points, are rotated on a regular basis to mitigate the risk of excessive familiarity between our ACGs and staff at the facilities where they are assigned. All ACGs are subject to an employee mobility agreement and may be rotated at any time as deemed appropriate by SCI management. Under certain conditions, as explained below, an ACG's official duty station can be changed to facilitate compliance with this policy.

In-Plant Assignments

ACGs assigned to work in a plant generally rotate to a different facility due to workload demands.

Each January, the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) must evaluate the actual duty point (i.e., in-plant assignment) for each ACG that has been continuously assigned to the same processing facility for 5 years or longer. The OIC should consider the questions on the [SC-388, Annual Review of In-Plant Assignments \(More than 5 years\)](#), to help determine whether to seek approval of an in-plant assignment longer than 5 years:

- A. What is the grade level of the ACG and the location of the assignment?
- B. How long has the ACG been assigned to the facility?
- C. During this period of time, has the ACG worked on other assignments, such as Temporary Duty Assignments? If so, how many and of what duration?
- D. Has there been a change in ownership of the company? If yes, when?
- E. Has plant management changed in the areas where the ACG has contact? If yes, identify the positions in which there has been a change in management and when the change occurred.
- F. Has the ACG had the same supervisor for the past five years?
- G. Could increased supervision or verification of the ACG's work be an option in lieu of reassignment? Provide specifics of how this could or could not be accomplished.

- H. Would it be advantageous for the ACG to be assigned to a different plant to gain more knowledge/experience in commodity grading and enhance their career development?
- I. What would be the impact on the SCI Division if the ACG was assigned to a different plant?

If the OIC determines that the ACG should remain at the same duty point, the OIC must submit a completed [SC-388, *Annual Review of In-Plant Assignments \(More than 5 years\)*](#) (see Appendix I for a sample), to the appropriate Regional Branch Chief (RBC) no later than January 31 of each year. If the RBC determines an extension should be granted, they are to forward the SC-388 to the Associate Director of Field Operations for approval. If the answers provided to the above questions are sufficient to mitigate the risk of excessive familiarity, the extension will be granted, the ACG may remain at the same facility and no additional measures are needed.

If the risk has not been sufficiently reduced, the RBC and OIC must develop additional measures (e.g., mandatory temporary duty assignments; additional supervisory and/or certificate reviews, including reviews by others outside of the chain of command; and additional onsite and/or remote video conference events to conduct inspection or certificate reviews) to ensure that there is not too much familiarity between the ACG and the plant staff. The additional measures must be documented and approved by the Associate Director of Field Operations before the extension is approved.

If the extension is not granted, the ACG must be assigned to a different duty point.

Area Office Lab Assignments and Terminal Market Inspection Assignments

Supervisors must rotate all qualified ACGs among all applicants as equally as possible. Assignments should not be made based on conveniences (e.g., the applicant is located near the ACG's residence). Work assignments subject to rotations include lot inspections, sampling assignments, tank ship duty, in-plant shift work, contract houses, weekend work, temporary duty assignments, out-of-town inspections, and typical "on the market" inspections. In addition, overtime, weekend, holiday, and "call-back" assignments must be rotated as equally as possible. It is acceptable to provide the first opportunity to volunteer for such assignments to lower-grade personnel if they have the skills necessary to perform the work. The equitable rotation of ACGs can be verified by assessing the "Daily Log of Inspections," SQL report SS-114, or comparable assignment sheets.

One-person terminal market locations must be subject to increased supervision. OICs must conduct quarterly supervisory reviews. Over the course of a fiscal year, two supervisory reviews must be in person; one of the in-person supervisory reviews must be unannounced. As applicable, each quarterly review must include an evaluation of at least 25 certificates of each inspection type (e.g., SC 300, SC 205, and SC 301). In each calendar year, at least two relief ACGs must be temporarily assigned to the market for at least one week in duration to cover for leave taken by the

incumbent ACG; the relief provided by these two ACGs should be at different times, not during the same week.

If the same inspector is assigned to the same one-person terminal market for more than 5 years, the RBC and OIC must implement additional measures (e.g., mandatory temporary duty assignments; additional supervisory and/or certificate reviews, including reviews by others outside of the chain of command; additional onsite and/or remote video conference events to conduct inspection or certificate reviews). Any such additional measures must be approved by the Associate Director of Field Operations before implementation.

Shipping Point Assignments

Shipping point inspectors work for State cooperators. Please refer to the *Federal-State Supervisors Manual* for instructions on rotating inspection assignments. Per guidance in the Manual, no shipping point inspector, including supervisors, may remain at any inspection point for more than 3 consecutive years.

Requests for assignments of shipping point inspectors, including supervisors, of 3 years or more at a single location must be made in writing to the appropriate Federal Program Manager with approval granted by the Fed/State Management Branch Chief and the Associate Director of Field Operations.


Change in Duty Station

If the distance from an ACG's previous duty station to a new duty station is less than 50 miles, the employee is not eligible for relocation expenses and their official duty station can be changed by issuing the employee a change in official duty station letter (see Appendix II for a sample) and processing an SF-50, *Notification of Personnel Action*, with an approved justification from the RBC for the change in duty station attached (an email is sufficient).

Any relocation of more than 50 miles requires a directed reassignment of the ACG and the AMS Administrator's approval. Please consult with the appropriate RBC for additional guidance.

APPENDIX I – SC-388

[Electronic version of the SC-388](#)

 United States Department of Agriculture	
SPECIALTY CROPS INSPECTION DIVISION FIELD OFFICE IN-PLANT ASSIGNMENTS OVER 5 YEAR ANNUAL REVIEW	
YEAR:	OFFICE:
NAME OF ACG:	GRADE LEVEL:
PLANT:	HOW LONG HAS THE ACG BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE PLANT?
HAS THE ACG WORKED ON OTHER ASSIGNMENTS (E.G. TEMPORARY DUTY) DURING THIS PERIOD OF TIME? IF YES, HOW MANY AND FOR HOW LONG?	
HAS THERE BEEN A CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP? IF YES, WHEN?	
HAS PLANT MANAGEMENT CHANGED IN AREAS WHERE THE ACG HAS CONTACT? IF YES, IDENTIFY THE POSITIONS WITH A CHANGE AND WHEN THE CHANGE OCCURRED.	
HAS THE ACG HAD THE SAME SUPERVISOR FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS?	
COULD INCREASED SUPERVISION OR VERIFICATION OF THE ACG'S WORK BE AN OPTION TO ROTATION? IF NO: WHY NOT? IF YES: PROVIDE SPECIFICS ON HOW THIS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED.	
WOULD IT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO BE REASSIGNED TO A DIFFERENT PLANT TO GAIN MORE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN COMMODITY GRADING AND ENHANCE CAREER DEVELOPMENT?	
WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT IF THE ACG WAS ASSIGNED TO A DIFFERENT PLANT?	
OFFICER IN CHARGE'S SIGNATURE	DATE:
REGIONAL BRANCH CHIEF'S SIGNATURE	DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED	
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED	
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Effective Date: June 2022

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APPENDIX II – CHANGE IN DUTY STATION**[Your letter MUST be on [SCI letterhead](#) and follow this format]**

Date

Mr./Mrs. Firstname Lastname
Agricultural Commodity Grader
Specialty Crops Inspection Division
City, State

Dear Firstname:

This is to notify you that your official duty station will be changed from City, State, to Different City, (Possibly Different) State, effective Date.

The relevant Parts of Sections of Chapter 302-Relocation Allowances of the Federal Travel Regulation are enclosed for your information. Section 302-1.1 (b) states that since the distance from your old duty station to your new duty station is less than 50 miles, you are not eligible for relocation expense allowances. Section 302.2.6 mentions that an exception to the above rule may be granted on a case-by-case basis. If you think you should be authorized an exception, you may submit your request for an exception to me. I will then forward it to my supervisors.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter by signing and dating the copy identified as “Receipt Acknowledgement.”

If you have any questions, please contact me at ...

Sincerely,

Officer-in-Charge
Specific Area Office
Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division

Enclosures

Receipt Acknowledgement

Date

“SCI moving forward in the 21st Century using technology, innovation, and old fashioned hard work”

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